1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

ti was not allowed to do so and had to use a ford nearer to the dairy at Mòdr.

The *palol* must be celibate, and if married, he must leave his wife, who is in most cases also the wife of his brother or brothers. According to the account given by Finicio in 1603, the *palol* could send for his wife and meet her in a wood every week or so and might also send for the wives of any other Todas. It is possible that this may still happen, but I failed to obtain an account of it and understood that the *palol* was really celibate. According to Finicio the restriction to which the *palol* is subject is that he may not touch a woman in the house. We have seen that in the lowest rank of the dairyman-priesthood intercourse with women in the house is allowed at any time and in the higher ranks only on certain days of the week. It is quite consistent with this that in the highest rank intercourse in the house should be altogether forbidden, but might still be allowed in the forest, and it is quite possible that Finicio is correct. I was unacquainted with his account at the time of my visit, and all other writers had been so unanimous as to the complete celibacy of the *palol* that I did not press my inquiries on this point very closely.

If a death occurs in the clan of a *palol*, he cannot attend any of the funeral ceremonies unless he gives up his office. If he resigns he is not again eligible for the office till the second funeral ceremonies have been completed. When a man of one clan gives up his office in this way, his place must be taken by a man of some other clan. Karkievan of Piedr was *palol* of the Nòdrs *ti* eighteen years ago and resigned when his wife died, his place being taken by Tulchievan of Kusharf. Two years later Karkievan resumed office and has been *palol* continuously since that time. Though there have been many deaths among the Piedrol, he has not attended a funeral, and has not, therefore, had to resign his post again.

In old times, it seems probable that it was usual to give up the office of *palol* when there was a death in the clan. According to tradition, the division of the Keadrol into the Keadrol and Kwaradrol by Kwoten (see Chap. IX) was ordained in order that there might still be men to undertake the office of *palol* when there was a death in the clan, the men of the

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

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The only food which the *palol* is altogether forbidden is chillies.

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The *palol* wears garments of the kind called *tuni*, of a dark grey material made at Nulturs in the Coimbatore district. They are brought to the *palol* by the Badaga called *tikelfmav*.[1] Each *palol* has two of these garments. One is worn as a loincloth and is called *pòdrshtuni*. It is only worn when definitely engaged in dairy-work and on certain ceremonial occasions, and at other times is kept in the outer room of the dairy. The other garment is called *kubuntuni*, and is worn like the ordinary cloak, but always with the right arm out (*kevenarut*). It is worn when not engaged on sacred business, and on a few occasions is worn together with the *pòdrshtuni*. The small perineal cloth ordinarily called *kuvn* is made of the same material as the *tuni* and is called *kagurs* at the *ti*, while the string which passes round the waist and holds the *kagurs* in place is called *kwainur* or *kwoinur*.

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I was told that the *palol* should never cut his hair or his nails while he is in office.

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If a *palol* has held office for eighteen years without a break, he performs a special ceremony. The essential feature of this ceremony is that the *palol* has intercourse in the daytime with a girl or young woman who must belong to the Tartharol. The woman is chosen by the *palol* and the matter is arranged by the clan to which the *ti* belongs. On the appointed day the woman is brought to a village near the dairy at which the *palol* is living; if he is at Mòdr, for instance, the woman will come to the adjacent village of Perththo. She must bathe carefully and be adorned with all possible ornaments and fine clothing. After the work of the morning is over, the *palol* gives rice and milk to the *kaltmokh* and tells him to have food ready for him when he returns at night. He then goes covered with his *kubuntuni* to a wood near the village, where the woman will be awaiting him. Later the woman returns to the village and the *palol* remains in the

[1] According to Breeks (p. 14) these garments are made by the Badagas of Jakanerè. This may be correct, but it is much more probable that they are procured through the Badagas living in this village.

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

786 793 833 wood completely naked till sunset, when he dresses and returns to the neighbourhood of his dairy, but remains in an adjoining wood till midnight. He then bathes in a stream and going to the dairy calls "*Kaltmokhia*!" twice. The *kaltmokh* comes out of the sleeping hut and brings a stone resembling the *polvelkars*, on which the *palol* sits, and the *kaltmokh* pours buttermilk (*kaizhvatiti*) for the *palol* according to the customary ritual. Then the *kaltmokh* brings the *papun*, and the *palol* washes his hands and goes to rest. There was some difference of opinion among the Todas as to whether the *palol* would continue to hold office after this ceremony. He undoubtedly returns to his work, but it seemed probable that he would retire after a short time and his place be taken by another. In this ceremony the celibate priest after eighteen years of office has intercourse with a woman belonging to the division not his own. This takes place in the day-time, the *palol* thus committing an act which is ordinarily regarded by the Todas as immoral.[1]

The last occasion on which this ceremony was performed was when it was done by Kodrizbon, who lived before the time of the grandfather of Kaners, who is himself an old man. Karkievan has now been *palol* of the Nòdrs *ti* for sixteen years, and there was already at the time of my visit much talk among the Todas about the ceremony which he might be expected to perform two years later.

184 554 793 234 A man who has given up the office of *palol* is known as *patol*. It was quite clear that, on resigning office, he entirely lost his sanctity, and it did not seem that he derived any great social importance from having held the sacred office. I could find no instance of a man who had been *palol* having any special influence or power either in his clan or among the Todas generally. Only in one way are the *patol* important, and that is as repositories of the knowledge of the dairy ritual, and any man about to enter on the office of *palol* will learn the details of the ritual from those who have held office before him.

I could learn of one privilege only pertaining to a *patol*.

[1] It is possible that Finicio was told of this custom, and that his statement about the relations of the *palol* to women only refer to this ceremony.

602 ing the hair or in bathing. The latter is so extended that one may not even be present while the other is bathing, though the preparing and bringing of bath-water is allowed and is as a matter of course done for a father by [264] his daughter. Another curious taboo may be placed here, though it is limited in its operation in such a way that its allocation is somewhat doubtful. The water with which a man washes his right hand after eating (it should be remembered that in India the food is handled with the right hand only) must not be thrown away by his female poɭjoiɭ or ŭuɯdmortkvæidvoj who is older than himself. His mother may do so and normally does until he marries, when his wife normally performs the office. His daughter or daughter-in-law may also dispose of the water. There is also a prohibition against breaking wind in the presence of a ŭuɯdmortkvæidvoj or poɭjoiɭ of the opposite sex.

602 533 Men and women seldom sing together, though it sometimes happens, and more especially in the case of husband and wife. But ŭuɯdmortkvæidvoj and poɭjoiɭ of opposite sex are forbidden not only to sing together but even to sing at the same time in one another's hearing. If a man is singing out of sight but within hearing of a woman of these categories and she wishes to burst into song, she will first ask who is singing and then regulate her actions accordingly; so also if a man hears a woman singing. One can only suppose that if they sang at the same time, they would be considered to be acting as if they were marriageable.

521 602 196 192 References to all subjects, whether regarded by our communities as decent or indecent, are very freely made in Toda conversations, as I have had occasion to observe when getting information from parties in which both men and women were present. Very frank speech is usual with women as well as men. But between poɭjoiɭ or ŭuɯdmortkvæidvoj of opposite sex, or even when one of these is present in the company but not actually addressed, this freedom is taboo. Reference, whether direct or by circumlocution, is forbidden to sexual intercourse, menstruation, the private parts, including by extension the nipple, the navel, the armpit, and pubic hair, to [333] the secreta, or breaking wind. Biting the skin of the neck while making love seems to be common, and the red mark which lasts for some time is [522] a subject for the jest: "You have been bitten by a tiger." Use of the compound verb stems which denote the act of biting in this way (mɯrɣŭərt-, "neck-cut," and kŭərtɣŭərt-, "cutting-give") or any indirect reference or jesting is forbidden between people between whom the taboos operate. So also is the use of the word kŭɯɳdjvöɪn, "fowl-lice," which also denotes the insects found in the pubic hair or the hair of the armpits; reference to these insects is also forbidden. Other words are forbidden in specific senses.

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

586 Rivers says that a man may divorce his wife for only two reasons, namely, either that she is a fool or that she will not work. He adds, however, that illness of the husband has also sometimes been regarded as a ground for divorce (Rivers, *The Todas*, p. 525).

But from my field-work in the Nilgiris, I gathered that the only real reason for a man wanting to be legally separated from his wife, was that she had co-habited with a non-Toda. He would then take one of his male buffaloes, tie a coconut shell round its neck in the presence of the *noim* which he had called together for that purpose. He would next cut off his wife's hair, beat her publicly, and end up by driving her together with the buffalo back to the house of his parents-in-law. I never actually saw this happen, but was assured on good authority (Kanvarsathi, Ujar (48), Sriar (20), Öknarsh (8) and Piliar (52)) that this was how it was done.

881 616 Before Toda girls reach the age of puberty, before their first menses, two things have to take place. First the ceremony called *putkuli tazar utiti* ("cloak over he puts") is performed. In it, a man of the opposite moiety to that of the girl (Teivilkh if she be Tardharsh, and vice-versa), comes to the *mad* at which she lives, during the day, lies down beside her on the *ertülkh* of her *arsh* for a few minutes and puts his *putkuli* over both her and himself.

881 616 833 604 124 A fortnight later, if a Tardharsh, she will have to be deflowered by a Teivilkh, and if a member of the latter, inferior, moiety, by somebody from the opposite one (Rivers has "a man of strong physique", which is not accurate enough, see *The Todas*, p. 503). It is looked upon as a great shame for a girl to start menstruating before this has been done, which reminds me of what Duarte Barbosa says about Nayar virgins (see above, p. 170). I was naturally most intrigued by this belief, and, as Rivers alludes only in passing to the custom and does not offer any explanation, I decided to try and find out for myself what the reason for it could possibly be.

Naturally this was no easy task, as people were too shy to speak about it, but I pressed Ujar (48) to speak for over a month, considering him to be the man, because of his age, standing and disposition towards me, the most liable to talk. I gave him presents such as a bag of rice, a buffalo calf and spectacles, but still he was reticent, and I could see that, although he wanted to confide the secret to me in return, he was afraid to do so. Finally I elucidated from him that his apprehension came from the fact that he feared that should he speak in the Nilgiris, the gods would wreak punishment upon him. I decided,

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

therefore, to take him right away, and on the 3rd of August, 1939, drove him down to the plains, near Mettupalaiyam, in order to question him far away from his hills.

I stopped at the side of the road when we had reached level ground, and, through Kanvarsathi – who was, incidentally, as curious as I to find out – requested him, now that we were out of *Terkish nor* (the land of Terkish), to speak. His answer was well worth the trouble I had taken, for he immediately replied, quite unexpectedly I must say, that unless this is done, "the maternal uncle of the girl will die".

I immediately pressed him for more. Why was it so, I asked, and how could such a thing have anything to do with the safety of the *mun*? He did not know, he said, it was just like that, and people had, of course, to guard themselves against this danger. To my next question as to what the maternal uncle could do to save himself if by any chance defloration had not taken place in this traditional way, he replied that he would still be safe if he could get hold of the girl and shave all her hair off.

This talk with Ujar (48) later led me to a number of psychoanalytical speculations in an attempt to make sense out of what he told me, and in the course of lectures on the subject to various specialized bodies, interesting discussions on this point have taken place. I shall give an account of these in the publication which I am planning for later, on the psychological findings of my research (see Introduction, p. 15).

Although the rules of endogamy within the two moieties of the Toda tribe, the Tardharsh and the Teivilkh, are very strictly observed, a regular system of concubinage and cicisbeism exists between them, organized as though to get round the difficulty. This is known as the *mokhthoditi* institution and it is an established feature of Toda social organization.

The origin of the custom, which is not restricted to inter-moiety cicisbeism and concubinage in practice, although it is so in principle, is said to be mythological. The god Kulinkarsh was the lover of the goddess Notirsh, without being married to her. The partners of the *mokhthoditi* are known respectively, the man as *mokhthodvaiol* ("the man who keeps the child"), and the woman as *sedvaltazmokh* ("the woman who joins the child"). It would probably be more correct to put these in the plural, since nothing theoretically really limits the number of persons to be joined in this way. In fact, however, the relation appears always to be between single individuals only.

There are two different ways in which the liaison is carried on.

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

married Nalsirwuf, ceased being head of his immediate family (although he was chief of the Melgarsh *modol*) and Pads, who already was the legal father of Mutnarsh, Kuddhue and Munbokwutn, became so in his place. The mother never has any very important say in family matters, and is treated as nothing more than an exalted kind of house servant.

As I have shown when discussing the question of Toda aggression, there is considerable jealousy among members of the tribe, in such matters as property and prestige. In sexual matters, however, there seems to be less of it, no doubt because their institutions allow for a number of outlets for their varying sexual fancy. Thus, the custom of *terershti* allows a man to carry off the neighbour's wife whom he covets, provided compensation in buffaloes is paid to the aggrieved party, and that of *mokhthoditi* for him to take as partner any woman of the tribe regardless of the moiety to which she belongs. There are other examples that could be quoted, such as, for instance, the privilege enjoyed by the lower class of Teivilkh priest of free access to all the women of the *mad* in which they serve and the Toda-Muduga exchange of wives of which Fürer-Haimendorf has spoken.

In spite of this, however, Kanvarsathi and various of my informants were unanimous in stating that sexual jealousy did exist among the Todas and, as they said, "more than it used to". There is a growing modern trend of resistance to *terershti*, the authority of the *noim* in such matters being often challenged now by an appeal to the Government. Again, informants claimed that the Todas did not take so readily any more to polyandry as before – although I, personally, could not see any falling away from this traditional form of marriage. The fact is, however, that jealousy with the Todas is not as curbed as it is with other polyandrous people. Because the property is divided between the brothers, it is as if jealousy were not banned as a serious threat to economic well-being as it is with others. The Todas, to put it briefly and in the language of polyanders elsewhere, "can afford to be jealous", and they are so at times with those outbursts of homicidal violence of which I have spoken earlier, when treating of the subject of their aggression.

Regulation of sexual intercourse in a Toda polyandrous household is again a matter of tacit understanding between the plural partners. Asked if there were any signalling system, my informants without exception ridiculed the idea, stating that it might perhaps have existed in the past but certainly did not now. During my entire stay in the Nilgiris, I never came across any evidence of it. In the Melgarsh family, which I specially studied, it appeared that the common wife, Erzigwuf, had no

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

595 833 little say in the matter. Whether this is generally true of other Toda households, I cannot say, not having studied them in such intimate detail as the Melgarol (people from Melgarsh). It was Erzigwuf who would decide which of the three brothers, Mutnarsh, Kuddhue, or Munbokwutn, she would have with her for the night. She usually slept with [732] the eldest, Mutnarsh, and while I was in the Nilgiris would have nothing [845] to do with Kuddhue because he being a cripple, she feared that he was [787] the cause of her having twice given birth to twins (an evil omen with the Todas). I rarely saw the youngest, Munbokwutn, join her; so much even, that I enquired once if he ever slept with her. To which I got the reply that if he did not, he would not stay. Erzigwuf's predilection for Mutnarsh was due to her preferring him, I felt, because he had the strongest personality. He was also the eldest which, even if it did not prejudice the common wife in his favour, did undoubtedly contribute to give him the assurance and poise which attracted her.

833 I enquired which was the usual position in which these people had coitus, and heard that it was that in which the woman lies on her back with the man on top of her, between her open legs. Only the inhabitants [186] of Malabar "do it the other way round", I was told, not without a certain amount of amused sarcasm. I also heard that copulation never [352] took place, and should never do so, on the *ertülkh*, the raised earthen [515] platform which serves as a bed and seat inside a Toda *arsh*. But as I received contradictory information on this point (others assuring me that it was, on the contrary, just there that couples made love), the latter should be accepted with reservation.

842 [171] No kind of birth control is practised at all, as is generally the case all over India. This is, to a large extent, due to ignorance, and where this is not so, to religious convictions, the former of these two reasons being probably dominant with the Todas. It is so in spite of a very 831 active and varied sexual life of both sexes within the tribe, something which strikes even an untrained observer at once. Toda women, I was told by Kanvarsathi, "think of nothing else (than sexual intercourse), escaping whenever they can into the *sholas* to copulate with men of their choice". Emeneau has recorded in *Language and Social Forms: A Study of Toda Kinship Terms and Dual Descent*, p. 173 (see Bibliography), that the Todas are "vigorously and adventurously sexual". He also says, further on: "Ordinary marriages within the moiety and the freedom allowed in changing mates, and the *to:tjoff* (*terershil*) institution providing for sexual unions overstepping the boundary between the moieties give evidence of a high degree of sexual activity." He goes on

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

to note that there "are many more irregular liaisons, not provided by overt institutions, and indeed punishable by fines if discovered". Of course, with a system of child-marriage and of socially determined paternity through the *pursiitpimi* ceremony, both of which to a large extent guard against the danger of illegitimate births, the fear of begetting children out of wedlock is much less than in other cultures, and consequently does not act as much as a deterrant here, with the Todas, as it would, I suppose, elsewhere.

In spite of careful questioning and observation, I could find no cases of impotence with men or of frigidity with women. Kuriolv, as recorded earlier (see above, p. 259), was evidently an exception in this regard, but his was a physiological impotence, due to a past accident while catching a buffalo at a funeral, and cannot, therefore, be considered as contradicting these findings.

B. SPECIAL STUDY: MELGARSH

This special study of the Melgarsh mund of the Todas of the Nilgiris has already been published in part in *Drives, Affects, Behaviour*, Edited by Rudolph M. Loewenstein, M.D. at the International Universities Press, Inc., New York, 1953. It is, however, elaborated in what follows with special emphasis on the anthropological description of polyandry within one family unit; observation of the children's behaviour is the subject of an addendum.

1. THE MELGARSH CLAN

The Melgarsh clan belongs to the Tardharsh moiety, but it differs in many ways from the others of its kind. Because of this, it appeared to W. H. R. Rivers as intermediate between Tardharsh and Teivilkh, and he even put the hypothesis forward, denied, however, by the Todas, that originally it may have belonged to the latter half of the tribe.

It is not necessary here to go into all the differences that put Melgarsh at variance with the other Tardharsh clans; readers interested in the subject are referred to Rivers' book. Suffice it to say that the Melgarsh people enjoy special privileges in connection with the dairy-temples – such as supplying *wursols* and *kaltmokhs* (the latter, attendants of the *palol*), taking food and buttermilk in the sacred enclosures of the *timaid* – the exclusive right of milking a buffalo to provide milk for a